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SUBJECT: SUDAN - USAID RED SEA STATE ASSESSMENT

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Summary

¶1. (U) From March 7 to 11, a joint USAID assessment team comprised of representatives from USAID's offices of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI), U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), and Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) visited Red Sea State to monitor USAID-funded activities and assess current conditions to inform an evolving USAID strategy for eastern Sudan. USAID staff anticipate limited humanitarian assistance programming, consisting of discrete humanitarian interventions in response to emergency conditions such as flood recovery. However, an increased focus on long-term development assistance is required to address the root causes of chronic poverty in the state.

Background

¶2. (U) Between March 7 and 11, a USAID joint assessment mission comprised of representatives from USAID/OTI, USAID/OFDA, and USAID/FFP traveled to Tokar and areas in rural Port Sudan, Red Sea State. The team met with U.N. agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and Red Sea State government ministry officials. The purpose of the trip was to monitor USAID-funded activities and enhance USAID's collective understanding of the regional environment to inform an evolving USAID strategy for the east. For FY 2007, USAID/OFDA and USAID/OTI are working together closely to identify appropriate joint programming opportunities targeting emergency needs and conflict mitigation.

Red Sea State Confronts Development Challenges

¶3. (U) USAID staff note a discernible shift from emergency response towards rehabilitation and development programs focused on livelihoods, capacity building, and economic recovery activities to address the root causes of chronic poverty in Red Sea State. U.N. agencies and NGOs operating in the region acknowledge great potential for development and are adapting strategies to increasingly target long-term development programs. However, despite significant needs, few NGO and U.N. actors are currently operating in the region.

14. (U) Significant development assistance is needed to address wide-spread poverty, high malnutrition rates, environmental degradation, weak infrastructure, and limited basic service provision in Red Sea State. According to the 2006 Oxfam/World Bank nutritional study, global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates in Red Sea State vary from between 19 to 30 percent with 32 percent of children and 24 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 45 identified as malnourished. Additional concerns highlighted by the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) include an estimated internally displaced person (IDP) population of 95,000, a weak agricultural base, the closure and restriction of livestock routes, climatic variations, and an inadequate water supply for both human and livestock consumption. The combination of factors has fueled a steady pattern of migration from rural areas to urban centers, contributing to growing urban unemployment as current employment opportunities are insufficient to accommodate the population influx. The recent mechanization of the port in the state capital, Port Sudan, has further reduced employment opportunities.

15. (U) Food insecurity in Red Sea State stems from cyclic drought and chronic poverty. According to a U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) assessment conducted in February 2006, 33 percent of the population of Red Sea State will experience food gaps and require food assistance in 2007. However, according to the U.N. World Food Program's (WFP) Annual Needs Assessment (ANA), carried out in November 2006, the strong 2006 rainy season resulted in increased grain production for the 2006/2007 crop season and improved livestock and pasture conditions. As a result, in 2007, WFP is not conducting general food distributions in the state, instead supporting targeted emergency recovery activities.

Obstacles to Development Efforts

16. (U) The signing of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) in October 2006 led to the establishment of the Eastern Sudan

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Reconstruction and Development Fund (ESRDF) intended to secure funds for the development of Red Sea, Gederef, and Kassala states. The Sudanese government is committed to an allocation of USD 600 million to ESRDF over the next five years to be governed by an oversight board. The state has initiated work on a multi-year strategic development planning process which will be coordinated with the federal five-year plan. However, due to internal disputes, the Eastern Front has yet to nominate its candidate to the oversight board and promised development assistance to the region has been stalled as a result.

17. (U) Established in December 2006 to coordinate Red Sea State recovery and development efforts, the newly created Red Sea State U.N. Regional Coordinator's Office (RCO) confronts significant challenges. A limited staff presence comprised of a field coordinator and a field coordination officer and the state government's reluctance to permit group NGO meetings hinder RCO coordination efforts. In addition, political sensitivities surrounding ESPA undermine the RCO's ability to report on ESPA progress. In the future, the RCO hopes to introduce a matrix to track state activities and funding to help advocate for improved access to the region.

Model/Cluster Villages Problematic

18. (U) USAID staff observed examples of government-funded model or cluster villages intended to accommodate 5,000 relocated pastoralist households in fifty model villages. Presently, the villages are populated by metal containers with doors and windows set on concrete slabs with no access to grazing land or water points. The current construction and configuration of shelter quarters fail to respect traditional settlement patterns due to their close proximity to one another and are climatically inappropriate given the extreme heat conditions. The government anticipates that pastoralist communities

will be encouraged to relocate to the model villages by the availability of services, including schools and health clinics. However, apart from references to wage labor in Port Sudan, it is unclear how the government plans to support households, should the relocation take place.

FY 2007 USAID Assistance

¶9. (U) USAID staff visited Tokar and rural Port Sudan to evaluate and monitor USAID-funded health and agricultural programs implemented by NGO partners International Rescue Committee (IRC) and FAO. In FY 2007, USAID/OFDA is providing USD 500,000 in emergency assistance to flood victims in Red Sea State and anticipates limited emergency humanitarian programming as a transition to increased development assistance moves forward.

¶10. (U) In rural Port Sudan, IRC recently completed the rehabilitation of six health centers and has handed over the centers to the state's Ministry of Health (MOH). However, USAID staff reported that further capacity building, training, and coordination with MOH are needed to expand the health facilities' programs. As the transition from relief to development assistance progresses, patterns of dependency and appropriate government and NGO roles will need to be addressed as part of a comprehensive strategy for eastern Sudan.

¶11. (U) In Tokar, USAID-funded agriculture and livelihood programs have provided vegetable seeds, farming tools, and livestock inputs to assist 7,000 farmers and 50,000 herders affected by flooding. USAID staff reported that the development of farmers' cooperatives, agro processing, marketing support, and product diversification are potential mechanisms to further strengthen the economic security of agriculturalists in the region.

¶12. (U) In addition, USAID/FFP continues to provide Title II food assistance in Red Sea State through WFP's emergency operation (EMOP). In 2007, WFP is making a concerted effort to focus on the root causes of food insecurity in the region and provide support for recovery activities, including emergency school feeding, food for asset protection, food for training, and food for work (FFW) instead of general free food distributions. In Port Sudan, USAID staff participated in a WFP implementing partner workshop focused on improving FFW implementation.

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